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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda
Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Proposals for a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. In 1987, in its resolution 1987/24, the Economic and Social Council adopted, for the first time, a long-term programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women for the years 1988 to 1992. In the same resolution, the Council reaffirmed the central role of the Commission in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and acknowledged the Commission as the competent intergovernmental body on matters concerning the status of women, especially with regard to policy development. The Council endorsed the priority themes for the next five sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and pointed out that they should be considered at regular sessions of the Commission under an agenda item entitled "Priority themes", notwithstanding world conferences and preparatory meetings or any process of review and appraisal that might take place. The Council decided that the priority themes should be related to the relevant provisions of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and of other policy documents.

2. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, and at the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995, the Commission on the Status of Women prepared a new multi-year programme of work with a more focused and thematic approach, taking up a cluster of the critical areas of concern from the Beijing Platform for Action at each of its sessions. Subsequently, on 22 July 1996, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1996/6 containing the multi-year programme of work for the years 1997 to 2000.[1] The programme of work, inter alia, would provide a framework to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and would be in line with the coordinated follow-up to conferences.

3. The forty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2000 was followed by the third session of the Commission acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Having already implemented the multi-year programme of work for 1997-2000, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda for its fifty-fifth session in 2001, which contained, inter alia, the priority themes

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"Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)" and "Gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". The respective priority themes are expected to serve as input to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the special session on review of the problem of HIV/AIDS in 2001.

II. Forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

4. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission on the Status of Women recommended its provisional agenda for its forty-fifth session to the Economic and Social Council for approval. The agenda, which included consideration, under agenda item 3 (c), of a multi-year programme of work and working methods, was adopted by Council at its substantive session of 2000. Following the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, the General Assembly, at its fifty-fifth session, adopted resolution 55/71 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. The Assembly noted that, at its forty-fifth session in 2001, the Commission on the Status of Women will develop a multi-year programme of work and in this respect requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission with recommendations for the effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the recommendations contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (General Assembly resolutions S-23/2 and S-23/3).

5. In preparing the proposed multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women (2002-2006), every effort has been made to implement, where appropriate, the relevant provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, in particular as it relates to the adoption of a multi-year programme of work and to coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. Furthermore, a review of the multi-year programmes of other functional commissions has been undertaken to ensure that the Commission on the Status of Women's new programme optimizes the thematic synergies between other functional commissions.

6. The programme of work will address the priority issues before the international community of particular relevance to women and gender equality, inter alia, taking into account the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/55/341). In that report the Secretary-General recommended that the Assembly may wish to request the Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-fifth session in 2001, to: develop a new multi-year programme of work, taking into account the need to fully implement the Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, and to integrate them into its programme of work; and consider the need to further develop the Commission's catalytic role in mainstreaming gender perspectives in United Nations activities (A/55/341, para. 75 (c)). Additional challenges to the full and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action as identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, along with the reports of the Secretary-General on assessment of the progress in the promotion of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (E/2000/57), on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (E/2000/67), and agreed conclusions 2000/2 of the Economic and Social Council[2] were also taken into account in developing the proposed multi-year programme of work.

7. To further facilitate the process, after the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized informal brainstorming sessions with delegates to the Commission on the Status of Women and its Bureau, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academicians. Relevant entities of the United Nations system were also consulted. Guided by the mandate outlined above, the brainstorming sessions addressed priority areas for future discussion by the Commission of its aim to ensure full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session. The proposed multi-year programme of work was enhanced both by the views of the Bureau of the Commission on

the Status of Women and those expressed in informal consultations with the delegations.

III. Multi-year programme of work

8. The proposed multi-year programme of work for 2002-2006 attempts to focus on current challenges, as identified in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, which impact on the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. Approaches and methodologies for implementation, including gender mainstreaming, as suggested in the outcome document, will be assessed during the mid-term review process in 2003 and 2005. Gender mainstreaming and implementation strategies also need to be addressed through the work of the Commission when considering thematic areas. The process of globalization in its social and economic manifestations provides the overall framework within which the thematic areas would be considered. Taking into account all of the above, the following themes are suggested for 2002-2006. The agreed agenda for 2001 is also included below.

9. The approach to the working methods of the Commission should be sufficiently flexible and dynamic so that the Commission would have the possibility to address issues other than those adopted in the multi-year programme of work, as deemed appropriate. It may also include the possibility of revisiting certain issues taken up in previous sessions and of modifying those already adopted. The Commission may, in addition, wish to address urgent issues not identified in the multi-year programme of work as they emerge.

2001

Item 1
Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)

Item 2
Gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

2002

Item 1
Eradicating poverty: globalization, women and work throughout the life cycle (linking into the Second World Assembly on Ageing)

While globalization has brought greater economic opportunities and autonomy to some women, many others have been marginalized as a result of deepening inequalities among and within countries. At the forty-fifth session, the Commission will look at the role of women and work throughout the life cycle. It will cover issues such as labour migration (internal, regional and international), the impact of flexible labour markets, formal and informal systems of social security and working conditions. In the light of changing demographic patterns and the implications of such change for ageing populations, it will look at older women both as workers and as providers of care-giving services.

Item 2
Gender and environmental management and natural disasters (linking into the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development)

The outcome document of the twenty-third special session also acknowledged that the increase in casualties and damage caused by natural disasters had raised awareness of the inefficiencies and inadequacies of the existing approaches and intervention methods in responding to such emergency situations, in which women, more often than men, are burdened with the responsibility of sustaining daily family needs. The impact of these and other factors on the environment put pressure on the survival strategies of poor households. There is a need for the development of

gender-sensitive strategies for crisis management and the delivery of assistance in responding to crisis situations. Women in many parts of the world are subsistence producers, dependent on natural resources. Their knowledge and priorities should be recognized and integrated in the conservation and management of such resources to meet the needs of all stakeholders and ensure sustainability of natural resources.

Item 3
Implementation strategies

Each session of the Commission on the Status of Women should consider good practices, national action plans and strategies to be employed for effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session. These strategies include short- and long-term time-bound targets or measurable goals, development and use of indicators, sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive budgeting and evaluation methods, including gender impact assessments and quotas in the promotion of progress towards gender balance in all areas and at all levels. The Commission, in taking up implementation strategies, may wish to focus on the specific thematic areas under consideration as well as on the overall implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session.

2003

Item 1
Institutional capacity-building for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including gender mainstreaming

In the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, Governments recognized that the effective and coordinated plans and programmes for the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action require a clear knowledge of the situation of women and girls, research-based data disaggregated by sex, short- and long-term time-bound targets and measurable goals and follow-up mechanisms to assess progress. They further recognized that efforts are needed to ensure capacity-building for all actors involved in the achievement of these goals. National action plans and strategies and the ways of monitoring their implementation, including through the development of sex disaggregated data, targets and indicators, need to be developed. Therefore, national machineries, which have the primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document and for promoting mainstreaming gender into policies, programmes and budgetary processes, need to be enhanced. In this regard, it is important that national machineries are given adequate human and financial resources to effectively carry out their functions. Priority should be given to mechanisms and methods for ensuring that all bodies involved in developing policies and programmes, including resource allocations, develop the capacity to integrate gender perspectives into their work.

Item 2
Women's human rights and elimination of all forms of violence, including trafficking (linking into the tenth anniversary of World Conference on Human Rights)

Despite the fact that many countries have taken legal measures with respect to the elimination of violence against women, the practice is still very prevalent. Domestic violence, violence related to armed conflict, violence resulting from cultural prejudices and the phenomenon of trafficking, which has reached alarming levels, are major constraints to women's enjoyment of their human rights. The outcome document (see resolution S-23/3) emphasized that: violence against women and girls should be a criminal offence punishable by law (para. 69 (c)); an international zero tolerance campaign could be launched (para. 87 (b)); non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive legislation should be created as soon as possible, preferably by 2005 (para. 68 (b)); legislation and mechanisms to handle criminal matters relating to domestic violence should be introduced or strengthened (para. 69 (d)); and that measures, including policies and programmes, should be undertaken to address racism and racially motivated violence against women and girls.

Item 3
Implementation strategies

2004

Item 1
Decision-making structures and leadership (linking into the 10-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development)

Five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, women continue to be underrepresented in economic, social and political institutions at the decision-making level. The decision-making structures continue to favour men because of the stereotypical gender roles assigned to women and men. It is increasingly recognized that gender inequality has a negative impact on governance. In order to achieve gender equality, the roles of women and men need to be reassessed and the stereotypes removed. With this in mind, strategies for achieving gender balance in all decision-making bodies, including those dealing with health policy development and planning, need to be developed. In addition, practical methods for changing stereotypical gender roles of women and men, including through the role of the mass media, need to be identified. As part of the discussion on decision-making structures, women's choices and their exercise of reproductive rights should be reviewed.

Item 2
Women, peace and security

The discussion on women and girls in armed conflict has focused on their role as victims and not as agents of change. There is recognition that women can make significant contributions to the peace process, including improving the efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Strategies for full and equal participation of women and men in conflict prevention, monitoring and resolution as well as post-conflict reconstruction and transformation should be further explored. In addition, the gender-specific implications of the involvement of non-State actors in armed conflict need to be examined. The development of capacity for the integration of gender perspectives throughout peace-support operations should be monitored systematically by the Commission.

Item 3
Implementation strategies

2005

Item 1
Review of further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including good practices in the implementation and lessons learned

In agreed conclusions 2000/2 of the Economic and Social Council, the Council called on its functional commissions to reflect on the possible review options following the most recent five-year reviews. A number of options are outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on assessment of the progress in the promotion of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (E/2000/57). The Commission could consider a review of the further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document, with a particular focus on gender mainstreaming during its session in 2005. In this respect, the Commission would be able to identify any challenges and obstacles to the implementation process following the last review period.

Item 2
Emerging issues and future-oriented strategies

Emerging issues could be identified during the review and Member States could deliberate (no negotiations) on future strategies to deal with the emerging and existing issues. The results could provide input into the 10-year review if agreed upon.

2006

Item 1
A gender perspective of the role of information and communication technologies

The outcome document of the twenty-third special session recognized the role of new technologies, including information and communication technologies (ICT). Information and communication technologies are central to the creation of a knowledge-based economy and society and they can play an important role in accelerating growth, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, particularly in facilitating

their beneficial integration into the global economy (see E/2000/52). ICT is also central to the economic transformation experienced in developed countries, such as e-commerce. However a digital divide exists, in particular for women. It is pointed out in the outcome document that technological change can bring new opportunities for all women in all fields. But at present, many women worldwide do not have access to the new technologies and cannot effectively use them. There is a need for women's education and training in science and technology, access to new communication technologies and strategies for reducing the gender gap.

Item 2
Implementation strategies

Item 3
Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty from a gender perspective

The United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty will end in the year 2006. This provides an opportunity for the Commission on the Status of Women to review the accomplishments of worldwide initiatives to eradicate poverty from a gender perspective and to identify, where appropriate, the extent to which the policies and programmes employed produced equal benefits for women. Links should be established with the review process to be carried out by the Division for Social Policy and Development.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 1* (E/1996/96); see also *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6* (E/1996/26).

[2] Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 2000/2 focus on the assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.